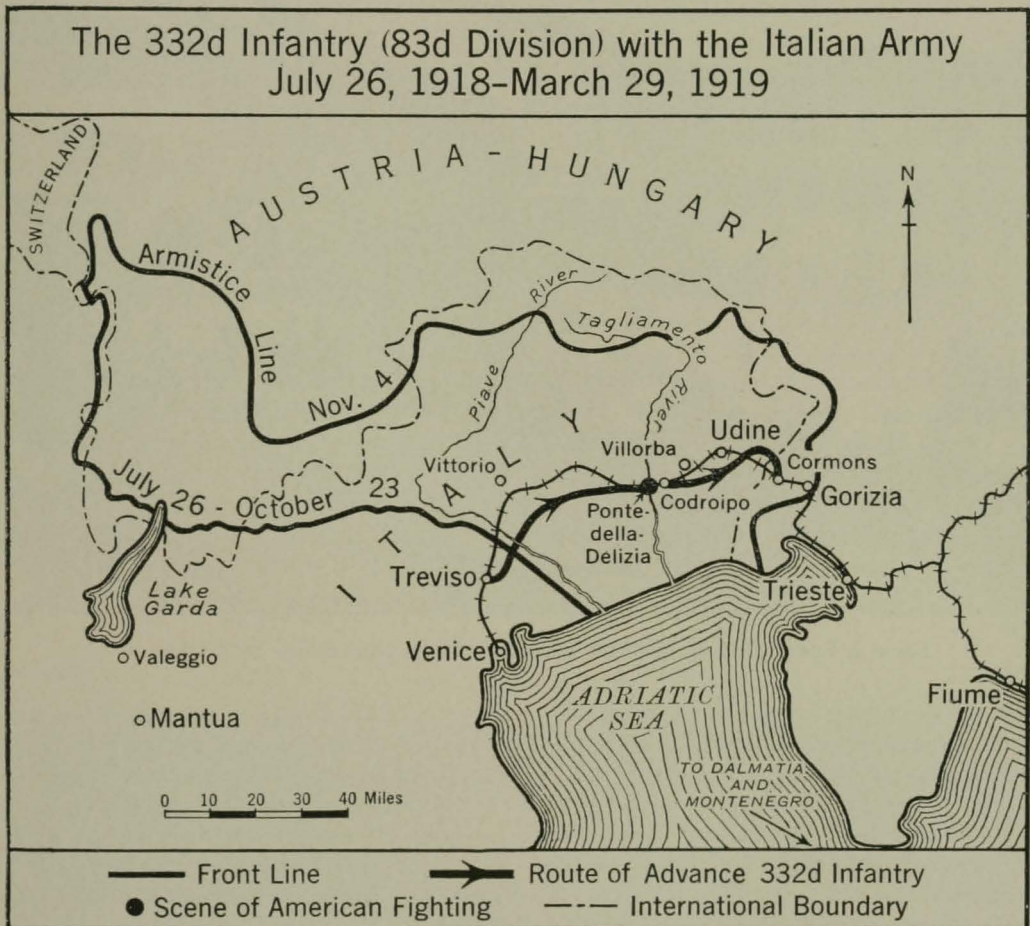


Chapter VIII

AMERICAN OPERATIONS IN ITALY AND NORTHERN RUSSIA

EXCEPT for small forces sent to Italy and Northern Russia, all American military operations in Europe during the World War were confined to dissipating its strength by sending troops to other theaters of operations, as often proposed by Allied governments. In two cases, however, this was ordered



financed to the Western Front. The High Command of the A.E.F. realized that the decision in the war would depend upon victory or defeat on the Western Front and, consequently, was decidedly opposed

by higher authority and the operations of these American forces, in Italy and Russia, form the subject of this chapter.¹

¹ An American expedition, not under the A.E.F., was sent to Siberia. It is mentioned in Chapter XIV.

AMERICAN TROOPS IN ITALY

JULY 26, 1918—APRIL 7, 1919

THE 332d Infantry Regiment, 83d Division, with attached medical and supply units, was sent to the Italian front in July 1918 in response to urgent requests from the Italian Government. Its principal missions were to build up Italian morale and to depress that of the enemy by creating the impression that a large force of Americans had reached that front

different articles of uniform and equipment, left the city by a separate road, circulated during daylight hours in exposed positions for both the Italians and Austrians to see, and returned after nightfall to its station at Treviso in as inconspicuous a manner as possible.

On October 24, the opening day of the Italian Vittorio-Veneto offensive, the



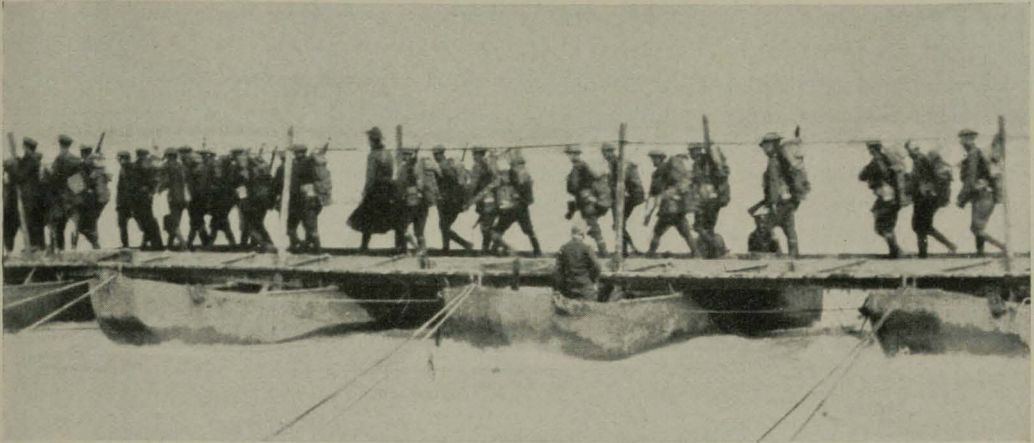
Scene in Codroipo, Italy, a Short Time After Its Capture by the 332d Infantry on November 4, 1918

and was preparing to enter the battle line and to take an active part in the fighting.

The regiment was first stationed near Lake Garda, where it trained in methods of warfare suitable for the difficult mountain terrain which comprised the greater part of the Italian theater of operations. Early in October it moved to Treviso, behind the Piave River Front, where it was assigned to the Italian 31st Division. From there, for purposes of deceiving the enemy, it staged a series of marches in which each battalion, with

Italian 31st Division, with the 332d Infantry attached, was in reserve. It joined in the pursuit of the fleeing Austrians on October 29 as part of the British XIV Corps of the Italian Tenth Army, the American regiment forming the advance guard of the corps. On November 3, after several hard marches, the 332d Infantry established contact with an enemy rear-guard battalion which was defending the crossings of the Tagliamento River near the village of Ponte-della-Delizia.

Early on November 4 the 2d Battalion



The 332d Infantry Crossing the Piave River on a Ponton Bridge
in Pursuit of the Austrians

crossed the river on a narrow footbridge and after a brief fight captured the Austrian position on the far side. Continuing to move forward along the Treviso-Udine railroad, the 2d Battalion occupied the town of Codroipo where it took possession of large stores of munitions and supplies. At 3:00 p. m., November 4, when the armistice between Italy and Austria-Hungary became effective, the leading American elements were at Villorba.

After this Armistice the American troops formed part of the Allied forces stationed in Austria and along the Dalmatian coast. The 1st and 3d Battalions were at Cormons near Gorizia, Austria. Later in November the 1st Battalion was ordered

to go to Treviso and the 3d Battalion to Fiume, Austria. The 2d Battalion was stationed at Cattaro, Dalmatia, and a detachment from it was sent to Cetinje, Montenegro. In March 1919 the regiment was assembled in Genoa and on April 3 its last elements embarked from that seaport for the United States.

In addition to this American infantry force, 30 American ambulance sections, a base hospital and 54 airplane pilots also served with the Italian Army. The American pilots, as members of Italian bombardment squadrons, engaged in bombing raids behind the Austrian lines, being especially active during the progress of the Vittorio-Veneto offensive.

Detachment of the 332d Infantry Near the Front Lines
Northeast of Treviso, Italy, October 5, 1918



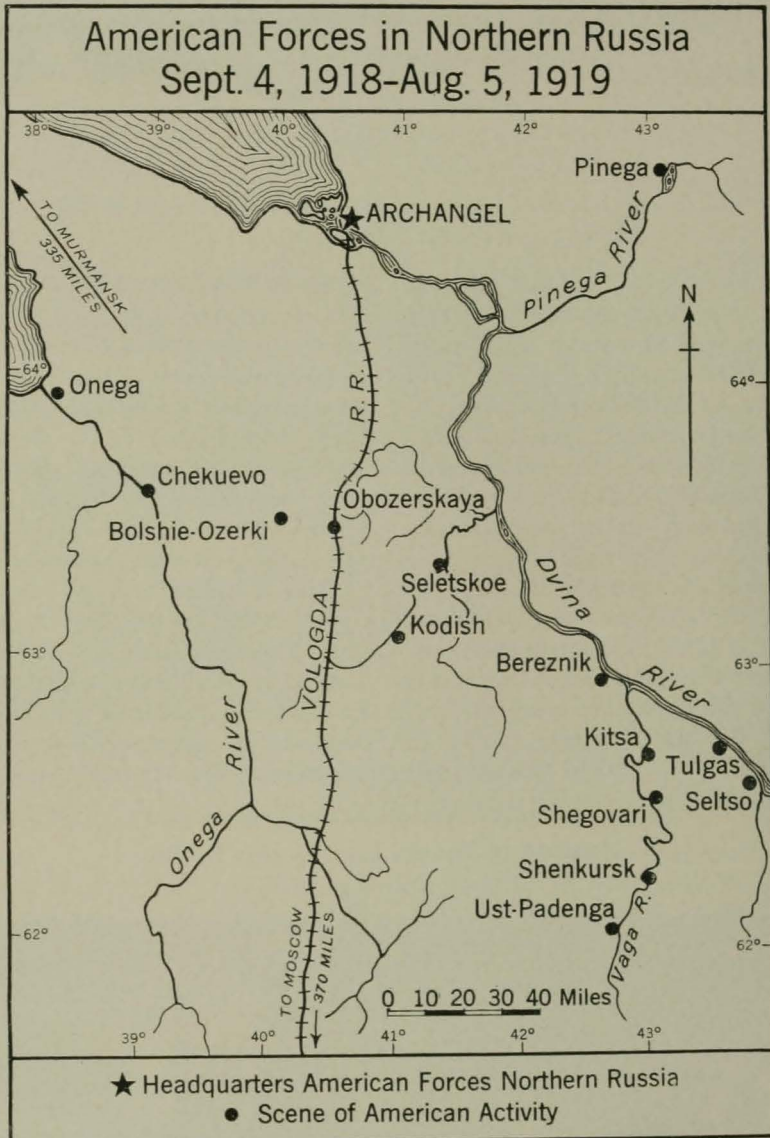
AMERICAN TROOPS IN NORTHERN RUSSIA

SEPTEMBER 4, 1918—AUGUST 5, 1919

PRIOR to the collapse of Russia in 1917, vast quantities of military supplies had been assembled in the northern part of that country at the ports of Archangel and Murmansk, the latter being an

open port the year round though north of the Arctic Circle. The Supreme War Council believed that Allied troops should be sent to secure these ports for the use of the Allies and to save the supplies located

there. Consequently an Allied force under British command was dispatched by sea and on August 3, 1918, seized the city of Archangel and drove the Bolshevik troops to the south of that place.



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The British Government, through its Ambassador at Washington, urged American participation in the undertaking. As a result the War Department on July 23 directed the Commander-in-Chief of the

American Expeditionary Forces to send three battalions of infantry and three companies of engineers to join this Allied venture. The 339th Infantry, 1st Battalion of the 310th Engineers, 337th Field Hospital and 337th Ambulance Company, all of the 85th Division, were designated. They sailed from England, and arrived in Northern Russia on September 4.

Operating under British command, this

places were as great a distance as 200 miles from their main base at Archangel.

The American soldiers soon participated in the fighting, their first casualties occurring on September 16 in the general area to the south of Obcozerskaya.

During their service in Russia the American troops conducted many small operations under arduous conditions, the normal hardships of warfare being intensified by



An Advanced Outpost of the 339th Infantry in Northern Russia,
February 21, 1919

small American contingent was soon split up in isolated detachments protecting, with Allied troops and Russian volunteers, the vital points on the railroads and rivers which were the main avenues of approach to the coast. The Americans were spread out over a front of 450 miles and in some

the deep snow, intense cold, darkness of winter in the Arctic Zone and the long lines of communication, which were in constant danger of being cut by the enemy.

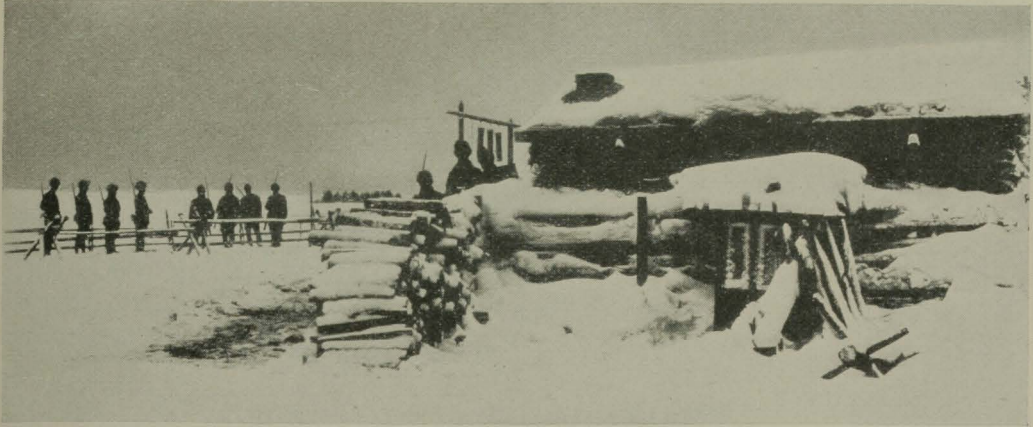
During January 1919 the Bolsheviki launched an offensive northward between the Dvina River and the railroad, forcing



American Soldiers in Archangel, Russia, October 25, 1918

Convoy En Route from Archangel to Bereznik, Russia
Typical view of the terrain of the region





American Blockhouse at Tulgas, on the Dvina River, Russia
Two patrols are in front of the blockhouse, one returning, the other just starting

the evacuation of Ust-Padenga, Shenkursk and Shegovari after heavy fighting. This caused the Allies to establish a new line of defense, and in garrisoning it the American forces became more widely dispersed than before. In March severe fighting developed around Bolshie-Ozerki and on May 1 a long-threatened attack in the vicinity of the Vaga River, 18 miles southeast of the town of Bereznik, was beaten off.

During April 1919 the American 167th and 168th Railroad Transportation Companies joined the expedition, operating mainly in the Murmansk region. After performing valuable service they were returned to France three months later.

The American soldiers began to be withdrawn from the forward positions late in

May 1919. They were assembled at Archangel and soon thereafter sailed for France, being replaced by British troops newly arrived from England and by Russian soldiers. On August 5 the headquarters of the American force in Northern Russia was officially closed.

In the opinion of the senior American officer the expedition was not particularly well managed and his troops were subjected to needless hardships.

More than 400 casualties were suffered by this small American force, most of them occurring after the fighting had ceased on the Western Front. In spite of this, however, and the trying nature of their service, the American units performed their duties with great fortitude and bravery.

Outpost of the 339th Infantry at Ust-Padenga, Russia
This was the most distant post from the base at Archangel





American Docks at Nantes, November 3, 1918
Third largest port of the A.E.F.